

Congressman Rob Simmons

Connecticut 2nd District

- Armed Services Committee
- Military Procurement Subcommittee
- Military Personnel Subcommittee
- Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee
- Subcommittee on Railroads
- Subcommittee Highways & Transit
- Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation
- Chairman for the Veterans' Subcommittee on Health



Dear Friends:

In July, members from the Connecticut and New York delegations joined me to introduce the "Long Island Sound Stewardship Act," which provides \$80 million to continue efforts to restore the environmental health of Long Island Sound and protect open space and increase public access along the Sound. The entire Connecticut Congressional delegation co-sponsored this important legislation.

Long Island Sound is a source of livelihood, scenic pleasure and recreation for many in Connecticut and New York. The Sound contributes approximately \$6 billion annually to the regional economy and is a cherished resource for the 10% of Americans living within 50 miles of its shores.

The "Long Island Sound Stewardship Act" will help sustain this valuable resource. Our shoreline communities will benefit from the most effective conservation efforts to enhance the Sound, and I am proud to work with my colleagues from both sides of the aisle toward this goal. The legislation establishes a voluntary process using the most effective conservation methods available to identify, protect and enhance sites around the Sound with ecological, educational, and recreational value in Connecticut and New York. It creates an advisory committee to the Environmental Protection Agency of public and private stakeholders from all levels of government, private citizens and public advocates. The group will recommend the most important ecological areas that have the best public access.

The bill authorizes \$40 million per year in matching grants to buy, protect and preserve the lands recommended by the stewardship group. The program is voluntary and protects property rights.

Locally, communities are working to preserve our environment along the Sound. Last month I was happy to present the Town of Westbrook and the Westbrook Conservation Commission with a check for \$296,843 to purchase and conserve land known as the Salt Island Overlook. The property has spectacular views of Long Island Sound and it is essential to protecting the quality of the Sound. The area is being threatened by development and the community has decided to take steps to acquire and protect the property.

Connecticut is blessed to have an abundance of natural beauty and we are equally blessed to have communities like Westbrook that recognize the importance of maintaining our environment. Connecticut's entire shoreline is part of the drainage basin that empties into Long Island Sound, which is one of the most important estuaries in our nation. We are responsible for passing it on to our children and their children. I am happy to be part of the team